

Book Review by Bhikkhu Dhammavihari,
Pupil, colleague and friend.

Malalasekera Mataka Satakaya
Or
Malalasekera - A Hundred Memorable Utterances
[A Hundred Memorable Utterances of MALALASEKERA]

This is indeed in outward appearance a glamorous paperback with the dignity of the 21st century. Open the book and glance through a page or two and you will discover it to be as much wholesome.

This beautiful booklet of 144 pages which is printed in Sinhala is a self-announcing biography of the late Professor Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera who peacefully passed away twenty-five years ago on 23rd April 1973, at the relatively young age of 74 years. The author, veteran journalist Nemsiri Mutukumara, who is known to be a very respectful disciple of this revered guru, authored the first edition of this within two years of his death. Now it comes out again, 23 years later, on his 25th death anniversary in its unsurpassable great format. Our grateful thanks to Nemsiri,

The late Professor was internationally known to be a great thinker, writer and speaker. As students of his, dating back to more than fifty years, we have known his versatility in a wide range of subjects, starting with Buddhism which was his forte, and ending up with Japanese *Ike bana* or the Kama Sutra. He had mastered many languages almost to a point of fluency, and as for his oratory in Sinhala and English, it is still difficult to find his equal or rival.

We also applaud Nemsiri for this choice of his, that he thought the best tribute we could pay a great celebrity like Professor Malalasekera is to bring together, even in miniature, the wisest, brightest and the wittiest sayings of this

great dramatis personae, gathered from the many theaters in which he performed.

One thing that one cannot miss in these utterances of this unmistakable diplomat is that he is extremely cautious and guarded in his comments on all issues, whether it be the personal character of persons or problems related to religion, sexes or politics. He beautifully reports on many things but rarely assesses any person or situation. This made his diplomatic career in later years much smoother than that of many other contemporaries.

See item 50 on page 85 on the Buddhist Commission Report and the Bandaranaike government. He says: ' The leaders of the newly set up government have pledged before the people that they would act in a manner that Buddhism would get its rightful place of honour in the country and that people would be enabled to live according to the teachings of Buddhism. ' It is a very safe answer to a direct ' yes or no ' question.

To sample just a few more. At item 52 on page 87 our one time Prime Minister Sir John Kotalawela stands out as a great soldier on his own right. At items 31 and 32 on pages 52-54, the learned Professor of Buddhist Studies, talking of the personal lives of the Buddhist monks, and their ownership of excessive property, raps on the knuckles many who deserve it. These acts of mild reproach do not normally reach people who choose to put the glasses on the blind eye. But the politeness or the diplomacy of our Professor - Diplomat should neither be misjudged nor be allowed to get lost in the desert air.

Talking of the worship of and the prayers to various categories of divinities by the Sri Lankan Buddhists at item no. 3 on page 19, the Professor is more precise and evidently more relentless than the popular preachers of today who are obviously a great deal more applauded. Finally, talking about an issue which is strangely engaging the attention of a vast majority of people of the country, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, namely the Bhikkhuni Sasana, he says at item 42 on

page 72. Please read it yourself and pay adequate heed to what he cautions you about.

It is a moderately priced book of only Rs. 100 / 00. Please buy it and be proud that you have it in your possession. Do not fail to read it again and again, sometimes as a family venture. Do not miss its balmy effect on your entire family, bringing about harmony and ironing out possible differences which creep into our family lives because of the diverse strands of ideological differences which exist all around us. It is good to have books, better to read them and best to have them and read them.